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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3626
INFO RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE IMMEDIATE 3061
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 007584

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DEPARTMENT FOR P AND EAP; DOD FOR USDP; NSC FOR DNSA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: THAILAND: MOVING FORWARD WITH THE COPE TIGER
EXERCISE

REF: A. SECSTATE 200365

[1](#)B. BANGKOK 7413

Classified By: Charge Alexander A. Arvizu. Reason 1.4 (a and d)

[1](#)1. (C) The annual COPE TIGER flight training exercise among the United States, Thailand and Singapore is scheduled to run from January 29 until February 9 in Thailand. More than 800 U.S. service members together with U.S. transport, tanker, fighter and ground support aircraft are planning to participate. In addition, approximately 300 airmen and fighter aircraft from Singapore and 350 airmen and ground support, fighter and observation aircraft from Thailand are scheduled to take part in the exercise. For logistics and planning purposes, U.S., Thai and Singaporean planners need a decision whether to proceed with the exercise no later than January 10.

[1](#)2. (C) COPE TIGER is the largest joint/combined air combat exercise in Thailand. Since its beginning in 1994, COPE TIGER has evolved into a multinational exercise conducted in two phases. Phase one was a tactical seminar/command post exercise coupled with a final planning conference that took place in Singapore from December 11-16. The flying training exercise is scheduled to take place at Korat Air Force Base in Thailand from January 29 until February 9. Thailand offers the United States good base infrastructure, large areas in which our aircraft can conduct unrestricted simulated air operations and access to bombing ranges -- all in short supply in Asia. U.S. Marine Corps aircraft scheduled to participate in COPE TIGER are based in Japan and hope to conduct warm weather operations in Thailand. U.S. Air Force aircraft include A-10 ground support aircraft based in Korea. The A-10s hope to conduct ground support training that they only have a limited ability to conduct in Korea. In addition to serving U.S. training needs, COPE TIGER promotes interoperability among U.S., Singaporean and Thai air and ground crews while demonstrating to neighboring countries U.S. commitment to promoting security in the Asia-Pacific region. The working relationships developed through COPE TIGER and other multilateral exercises have been invaluable in facilitating our rapid response to regional crises. This was most effectively demonstrated during tsunami relief efforts conducted during Operation Unified

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Assistance.

[1](#)3. (C) Post recommends interagency approval for U.S. participation in COPE TIGER. We believe that participation

in COPE TIGER will not be seen by the Thai or neighboring countries as our endorsing the coup. Drawing on points contained in Washington's December 18 cable (ref a) we continue to reiterate to senior Thai officials the USG's request that the Thai speed up the Constitutional drafting process, fully restore civil liberties, including the lifting of martial law as quickly as possible, and work to ensure an early return to a democratically elected government. Thailand has made good, but not excellent, progress toward restoring full civil liberties and returning the country to democratic rule. The interim government has lifted martial law in the vast majority of the country and elections are still on track to be held within one year. Nonetheless, we will continue to push our message. Participation in this exercise will also allow us to press home the message outlined in reftel with key Royal Thai Air Force leaders close to the Council for National Security. Post will send in a follow-up message concerning Cobra Gold and other exercises.

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